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INTERIM DIRECTOR

## County of San Diego

### DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND LAND USE

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## NOTICE

### Statement of Potential Reasons for the Elimination of Access to a State-designated Area of Identified Mineral Resource Significance (MRZ-2)

Project Name: Merriam Mountains Project, SP04-006

Project Location: The site is located in northern San Diego County north of the cities of Escondido and San Marcos. It is bounded by I-15 on the east, Deer Springs Road on the south, and Twin Oaks Valley Road on the west. (APN 174-190-41)

Date: March 20, 2008

#### PURPOSE OF NOTICE:

This notice is required by Section 2763 of the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA). This SMARA section requires that prior to approval of a project that *"would threaten the potential to extract minerals"* in an area that contains mineral deposits of regional or statewide significance, the lead agency (i.e. the County) shall prepare a statement specifying its reasons for permitting the proposed use. In addition to public circulation, this statement must be provided to the State Geologist and the State Mining and Geology Board for review and comment.

Comments on the project related to mineral resource issues should be directed to Maggie Loy at [Maggie.loy@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Maggie.loy@sdcounty.ca.gov) or at the above address. The comment period begins on March 20, 2008 and ends at 4:30pm on May 19, 2008.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### Project Description:

The Merriam Mountains project is under review by the County of San Diego and would include a maximum of 2,700 dwelling units within the southern portion of the 2,327-acre site. Approximately 537 acres of open space would be set aside in the vicinity of the proposed residential uses. The project would also involve the creation of a 1,192 acre biological preserve over the northern portion of the site.

### Potentially available mineral resources on MRZ-2 lands:

An area encompassing 709 acres within the Merriam Mountain project boundary has been designated by the State Mining and Geology Board as an area that contains mineral resources of regional or statewide significance (i.e. Mineral Resources Zone 2). Included in this area are 108 acres zoned for extractive use (S82) under the County Zoning Ordinance. This 108-acre area includes an abandoned aggregate mining site.

Based on a 100-foot excavation exclusion buffer around the perimeter of the MRZ-2 area, a 2:1 gradient on quarry side slopes and an average 50 feet of excavation over the remainder of the site, an estimated 34,000,000 cubic yards (75,000,000 tons) of crushed-stone construction aggregate could be recovered from the MRZ-2 lands located within the project boundary. At an average of 250 truck trips per day, the site could produce approximately 1,800,000 tons of aggregate per year for 41 years. This potential resource could be important to the Western San Diego County Production-Consumption Market region.

### Potential project impacts on the MRZ-2 Area:

The biological preserve and a small portion of the development footprint encompass the entirety of the 709 acres of MRZ-2 designated land. The biological preserve, as currently proposed, would involve a permanent easement that would not allow future access to the MRZ-2 lands for mineral extraction. The area proposed to be included in the development footprint would similarly preclude future access to the underlying minerals. Thus, the project would effectively eliminate access for mineral extraction to the areas designated as containing regionally significant mineral resources (MRZ-2) as described above.

## POTENTIAL REASONS FOR THE COUNTY TO PERMIT THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The County of San Diego has not completed its review of the proposed Merriam Mountains project. The potential reasons for project approval listed below are provided to elicit comment from interested parties and State agencies on the issue of the loss of access to important mineral resources. These reasons do not reflect any recommendation by County staff or any discussion or determination by the County decision-makers.

1. **Land use:** Mining operations in the designated MRZ-2 area would be incompatible with existing land uses in the surrounding area.
2. **Biological Open Space:** The 1192-acre area proposed for Biological Open Space in the northern portion of the site has been identified by the County and the Wildlife Agencies as part of an important biological core area known as the Merriam Mountains. This core area is under consideration for preservation in a proposed North County Multiple Species Conservation Plan. The function of the property as a biological core resource area cannot be duplicated or moved to another location. Mineral extraction would not be compatible with the protection of biological resources.
3. **Other open space:** The proposed project would preserve 537 acres of open space in addition to the area included in the biological preserve. This open space would provide additional parkland and recreational opportunities.
4. **Housing:** The proposed project would provide up to 2,700 housing units, including 270 units affordable dwelling units.
5. **Road Improvements:** The proposed project would contribute several million dollars toward public road improvements.
6. **Employment:** The proposed project would provide interim employment opportunities during construction and permanent employment opportunities in the commercial component of the proposal.
7. **Fire Safety:** The proposed project would improve fire safety on the subject property and in surrounding areas.

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Mineral Resources & Proposed Land Uses

MERRIAM MOUNTAINS  
SPECIFIC PLAN

0 0.125 0.25 0.5  
Miles

FIGURE  
1